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s Expression of Christianity in India

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JESUDASON, F. R. C. S. (Edin.)

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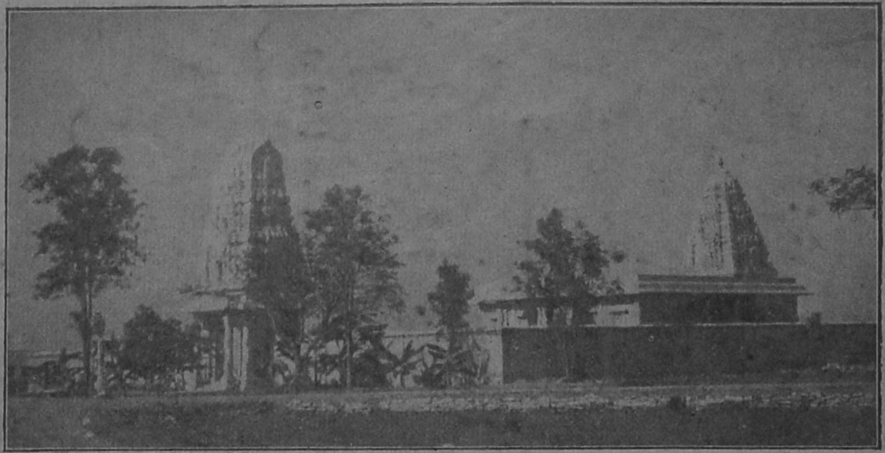

THE ASHRAM JEBALAYA (HOUSE OF PRAYER) SHOWING THE MATHIL (OUTER WALL) ENCLOSING THE PRAHARAM. (*see Page 8*)

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Indigenous Expression of Christianity in India.

By Dr. S. JESUDASON, F. R. C. S. (Edin.)

Christu-Kula Ashram, Tiruppattur (N. A.)

I prefer this term to what is known in common parlance as *Indianising Christianity*. Truth is universal and no one can '*Indianise*' or *Europeanise*" or '*Chinesise*' it. But at the same time one must recognise that there are God-given talents and qualities peculiar to every nation or group of people, who have been for ages moulded by environments peculiar to different climes and countries. Quite naturally, the manner in which these groups give outward expression to their inward devotion to God, differs in various ways. It has pleased God to tabernacle divine treasures in earthly vessels. The operations of the Divine Spirit manifest themselves in ways and forms according to the peculiarities of our human development. It is good it is so, because the radiancy and beauty of the colours are rendered all the more lovely because of variety.

We do not adopt indigenous expressions as a matter of policy for fitting in with the national sentiments or currents of the time. Neither do we follow them primarily with some ulterior motive of influencing those around us. This is not a mere change of front in missionary methods " for making more converts ". We adopt this because it is the natural manner in which we outwardly express our inward devotion to our Lord. Of course, any spontaneous expression of the inner spiritual life is bound to affect others. This is a resultant factor, but our mind is not primarily exercised about

that. Deep down within us there is a dynamic spring of inner life tending to burst out and flow through its natural channel.

The following are some of the outstanding manifestations, or rather tangible and living evidences of India's age-long religious aspirations. We have imbibed a rich religious literature (both poetry and prose) which has commended itself even to some great scholars of Western lands. But that is past glory! What about to-day, and especially about us, the "English educated" ones! Because a foreign tongue has taken the rightful place of our mother-tongue in all higher education, including even Christian theology, we have lost the capacity and initiative to produce anything that could enrich the sum total of religious literature. Indeed, here in the South, there is a peculiar Tamil known as "Christian Tamil". Christian phraseology and idioms have become very artificial in various ways. So ingrained is this artificiality with all its associations that the attempt of the revisers of the recent edition of the Tamil New Testament to use a language more true and natural to the real meaning of the expressions, met with a volley of opposition from some of our orthodox Tamil Christians. As for poetry, if we attempt anything in the foreign language in which we have been trained, we become the laughing-stock of our rulers, and if we attempt anything in the mother-tongue, I need not here describe the result! I do not forget here how poets like Krishna Pillai, N. V. Tilak, Vedanayaga Sastry and many others have contributed towards Indian Christian literature, but they were men who had not been spoilt by an over-dose of foreign culture. How many more of that type there should be, considering that many of us, at least in the South, have been Christians for more than two centuries! Besides, those men who have really contributed much to a first class Christian literature were mostly either converts or sons of converts.

Church Music: Nothing stirs an Indian so much as good Indian music. As the pilgrims march to the sacred places they cheer and inspire each other by singing those Bhakti songs, which have been the meat and drink of their forefathers. Those who watched the great march of Satyagrahis

in the days of the "civil disobedience movement" whether in the North or the South could not but have been impressed by the inspiring effect upon those brave hands, of the songs and music which formed part of their daily devotional life. Indian Christian poets like Vedanayaga Sastry, Krishna Pillai, N. V. Tilak, Marian Upadeshi and several others have poured out their souls in heart-moving strains of Indian lyrics and "devarams". Some of these have come out of their deep experience of God. But the average Indian Christian spurns these in favour of translated hymns and chants, which satisfy neither Indian nor European laws of poetry or grammar, but are a sort of mongrel that only provokes the pity and contempt of scholars both Indian and foreign. I have sometimes rudely disturbed the placidity of an orthodox Christian congregation by attempting to translate verbatim some Indian lyrics into English and singing them to the Indian air and 'anukka' (the tremulous fractional notes at the end of each verse)! A leading Indian Christian once remarked that he was afraid to take his Hindu friends past a Christian church during times of service, because the foreign tunes and chants used there may make them think the worshippers were not human beings but belonged to a different species of living creatures! How is an 'unbeliever' to be inspired and led into adoration of the Adorable One if the strains of music that rise from our places of worship strike such jarring notes upon his ears! Is not Christian music to be a vehicle of Christian witness also? I would strongly commend to the reader a thoughtful study of St. Paul's words, verses 23-25 of the 14th Chapter of I *Corinthians*. Our Christian worship is really in the "unknown tongue" of foreign model which our fellow-countrymen cannot understand.

It is very important to train young people in Indian music and so give a right start quite early in life.

The Sanctuary: A British missionary once remarked to me that a certain Christian church in India was a very bad imitation of his own in his native town in far away Scotland. Another time the architecture of a certain church in an Indian city made him burst out in laughter with the remark, " Why, this is just like the ... ... Church we have in ... ...

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(Brittain) but a bad imitation. How ludicrous and out of place it looks in an Indian setting!". An architecture that has been evolved as a result of European Christianity influenced by different culture, outlook and conditions both climatic and temperamental, when transplanted to another country so utterly different as India is from Europe, to say the least, is a 'misfit'. A building set apart for worship in India must inspire the Indian mind, whether Christian or non-Christian. Let us never forget that all that we feel, sing, wish or do (if we are going to be true to our high calling) must be directed to efficient Christian witnessing also : otherwise our religion becomes selfish and meaningless. One feels thankful that already there is a move in the right direction in several places. I believe that in one place in North India an attempt has been made to build some village Christian churches according to Indian ideals. At Trinity college, Kandy (Ceylon), a beautiful church modelled on Budhistic architecture has been built. A church building modelled upon Indian architecture has also been completed at Erode. All honour to those servants of God who have been moved by the visions of that new type of the Indian church is that to be!

In South India there is a wonderful temple architecture of the so called Dravidian type, and this has been the admiration of many, both Indian and foreign, for its artistic taste and originality. The open "Mandapam type" of architecture with its broad halls, when slightly modified, beautifully suits our climatic conditions for Christian worship and preaching. In South Indian temple architecture there are two main types: One, the "Chola-Pandian" and the other "Pallava".

The points common to both are, first the "Thirumathil" (an outer wall) enclosing a rectangular space. This enclosure is called the "Praharam" (the outer court). The opening in the outer wall into this enclosure is in the east and is called the "Mugadhuvaram" and over this main gate is a "Gopuram" (tower) which faces the main body of the temple. In the famous temple at Tiruvannamallai there are four "Mugadhuvarams". Often there is a small "Mandapam" in front

THE MUGADHUVARAM (ENTRANCE GATEWAY) WITH ITS GOPURAM (TOWER).

of the temple—"the Sannathi". The main body of the temple consists of the "Mulasthanam", the most sacred place which is somewhat on a higher level, and the "Mahamandapam" (the main hall or body of the temple). Over the "Mulasthanam" also, there is a Gopuram or tower. The points of difference between the "Chola-Pandian" and the "Pallava" type of architecture are as follows:—In the Chola-Pandian types, as seen at Tanjore, Madura, Tinnevelly, the larger of the two Gopurams is over the entrance gate or "Mugadhuvarams" and the smaller over the "Mulasthanam". In the "Pallava" type it is just the reverse. Also, the Pandi-Chola Gopurams are more elongated and end in a summit which is long with an arched roof, resembling a Budhist prayer-hall – the "Sala Gopuram". There are lion face expansions at either end – Singamugam. The Pallava type of Gopuram is more circular and ends at the top in a cupola or dome – Kinna Gopuram. But both types of Gopurams are built-up by a series of terraces rising tier above tier with little room-like cells all round ("Chaitya") imitating a Budhist monastery.

Historically, the Chola-Pandian type is more ancient and probably corresponds to the Christian era, but went out of fashion, when the Chola dynasty was suppressed by the rise of the Pallava Empire which held sway over South India roughly between 400—900 A. D. After this there was a revival of the Chola power and temple architecture

In the hey-day of Tamil power and naval glory. that majestic edifice, Brahadishvaran Kovil was built at Tanjore about 1000 A. D. by Rajaraja-Deva whose empire extended over the whole of the Madras Presidency and parts of Kerala, Mysore and Ceylon. The walls are engraved with the stories of his reign, 985–1012 A, D. In the Gopuram there is a large flat stone 50 ft. square below the cupola on top. Raja Raja possessed a powerful navy. His son Rajendra continued his conquests to Burma and added Pegu to the Chola Empire. Two granite pillars at Pegu still testify this. In memory of his victories over the King of Behar, he built the city of Gangaikonda Cholapuram and constructed a large artificial lake with an embankment 16 mile long for irrigating a vast

area. The famous Kailasanatha temple at Conjeevaram was built by the Pallava king Narasimha Varman II in the seventh century A. D. Ekambara Nather Koil of the same place must have been built before the first century A. D. as the famous Karikal Chola (1st century A. D.) is said to have had some repairs done to it. The larger Gopuram is of the Chola type ending in an elongated prayer-hall on the summit. In the tank in front, there is a Mandapam with a smaller Gopuram of the Pallava type. The inner precincts of the temple are about 25 acres in extent During the later years of fighting and scramble for domination, both Mahomedan and British troops were quartered here, and so several works of art have been damaged or defaced In the days of Vijianagaram Empire, additional Mandapams were built and recently some wealthy Hindu gentlemen of the town have spent lakhs of rupees in rebuilding and renovation works. The fervent devotion of the people to the temples could not be better illustrated than by what happened in recent years when a temple had to be built at Trichendur on the sea-coast in the Tinnevelly District. As building stones were not available near by, thousands of people stood in long rows for miles and passed on from hand to hand the stones from the stone-quarry several miles away from the building site!

The building of large temples with high and ornate Gopurams seems to have had its inspiration from Budhism which was the dominant faith in South India about the beginning of the Christian era. The architectural details of these high Gopurams follow the arragement of the monastic cells "Chaitya" all around a central enclosure, tier above rising in terraces in a somewhat tapering fashion but ending either in an elongated hall-like structure (Pandi-Chola), or in a cupola (Pallava). The height of a Gopuram is usually about one and a half times the length of the base at the ground level. Temple architecture is a very old science in S. India. It is called 'Silpasashtra'. There are definite rules to be followed by the architect.

In ancient days these temples served several useful purposes. They were of course the centres of worship. They were halls of learning. Courts of justice were held within

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its precincts. They were places of pilgrimage and therefore weary pilgrims found their places of rest in the temple mandapams The building of such edifices also enabled man to give vent to his feelings of piety, devotion, and gratitude for various divine acts of goodness in tangible and satisfying channels of human outward expression. All these paved the way for the development of architecture, art, and sculpture in which our forefathers have left us a rich heritage And lastly, the epigraphy (historical inscriptions carved on stones) in which the temples abound has given the scholar of historical research a wealth of illuminating historical authority which is now opening the eyes of India's children to study the ancient history of their land with a new and more correct perspective.

In pre-historic forms of worship in South India image worship and temple buildings do not seem to have played any prominant part. During the period immediately preceding and following the time of Christ Budhism seems to have been the dominant faith in South India. The Classical Tamil literature of the first two centuries as well as the ancient temple architecture bear abundant testimony to this fact. It is even maintained by some that the only Budhistic literature of S. India about the time of Christ is in Tamil as all Sanskrit literature bearing on the subject at that time was completely destroyed by the over-jealous Hindu revivalists. When Hinduism revived, true to its outstanding characteristic of compromise and absorption, it adopted the spirit of Budhism and its architecture,

It is a noteworthy fact characteristically revealing the Hindu mind that the Hindu rulers, while they seem to have unstintingly lavished their money on temples and other buildings meant for the public good, seem to have left very little in the shape of stately edifices to serve as monuments of their own personal glory or prowess.

In this Ashram also, we have built a Christian church adapted from Dravidian temple architecture. The temple that gave us the first inspiration was the Kambanathi Mandapam, near Tinnevelly town. The plan of the Jebalaya (House of Prayer) is roughly somewhat as follows:-

(1) The Mathil or outer wall--rectangular, enclosing the (2) "Praharam" a rectangular enclosure which is a garden around the church with crotons and cocoanut palms. This garden is useful as a place for quiet meditation There are grass and flower beds with footpaths in between Stone seats are placed in different corners of the garden for purposes of quiet meditation. The part of the enclosure leading from the "Mukathuvaram" is paved with stones and on either side of this (3) is a tank (in our case an artificial one). There are also two circular lotus tanks in addition. (4) Then, there is a mandapam portico leading into (5) the "Mahamandapam", the main body of the church with its aisle and naves, but all open, the flat stone roof being supported by rows of parallel carved stone-pillars standing on pedestals. On the pillars, there are different carvings such as a lotus bearing a cross, vine creepers, flowers or something characteristic of the clasical temple carvings. On the top of each pillar is the "bothikai" or capital with carving on either side like a bunch of plantains hanging from a tree with its flower at the end. Above this are the "Sarams," or the stone-bressemmers with flowers carved underneath. All along the outer edge of the terraced roof, "Kodungai" (stone cornices) line the border on all sides. (6) "The Mulasthanam" or the chancel at one end is on a slightly higher level with two little rooms on either side. Between these and the main body of the church, there is a beautiful carved folding door, ordinarily shut, but open during Divine Service. This ensures privacy for any one wishing to remain for private prayer near the chancel, and is also useful to keep any valuable things safe as the temple is open all day. There are two small slit like openings in this folding door for visitors to see the inside of the Mulasthanam. Over the Mulasthanam is the large Gopuram, the slightly smaller one being over the entrance gate. There is a stone altar at the chancel and on it is a carved marble slab. In the centre of the slab there is a large lotus bearing an upright cross. On one side of the Cross there is a carving of a vine creeper with bunches of grapes. On the other side is a wheat plant with a corn of wheat falling to the ground. On the stone beam over the entrance into the chancel are inscribed these words, "God forbid that I should Glory save in the Cross of Jesus Christ my Lord"

We have been struck by the way the villagers have been attracted to this place of worship. The patients come there for prayer and it is a moving sight sometimes to see them pouring out their hearts to God. Villagers come all day to visit the temple and often join us in times of worship.

"Why imitate all these?" Some one might ask! I ask "what are we in India for?" Were a non-Christian to come near our place of worship. does it inspire him? Does he not feel that our religion and forms of worship are utterly foreign to the genius of the land? Have we not made Jesus Christ a stranger and a foreigner in this His land?

"But what about the enormous expense?" Why, you aspire to collect lakhs to build cathedrals of an European model! You lavish enormous amounts on your own palatial houses! If it be not wasteful to beautify and adorn with tasteful artistic pieces of work your own private residence, how would you consider it a waste to spend money on an edifice meant for the worship of Almighty God, in which the poor as well as the rich have a share? Would you like all sacramental art born of man's devotion to God perish because of a sanctimonious care for the poor savouring of the spirit of Judas Iscariot?

At the same time, if the main principles of architeeture are followed, the expenses can be reduced by using less expensive materials and being less elaborate in the carvings.

Also the type of architecture adopted must correspond to the types prevalent in the part of the country where the church is built—in North India, perhaps the Indo-Saracenic, in some parts the Jain type; in the South. the 'Chola-Pandian' or the 'Pallava' type; in Ceylon the Budhistic and so on.

There is a touching tradition about one of the early converts of the Christian church. There was a sculptor who was an expert in making idols for the temples of his country. He was converted, and became a disciple of Jesus Christ. But there was a burden in his heart which weighed heavily upon him. "Before I became a Christian," Said he to himself,

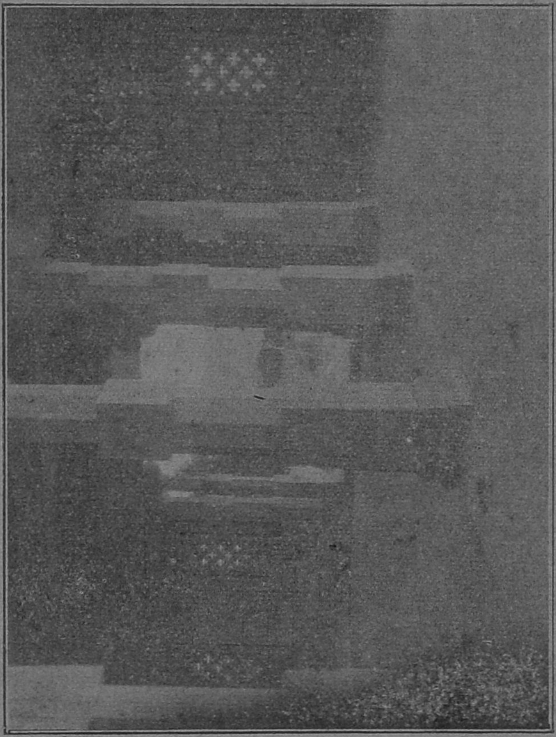
"I used to express my devotion to God by making idols But how can I express my devotion to Christ now!" One day a happy thought struck his mind. He made a beautiful sculpture of the Good Shepherd which inspired all who saw it.

The Christian Church and Ministry (*or* "*Priesthood*") Here one must say something about the "the Church" as an organised body. Intensity or solidarity in organising religion or conservation and preservation of the same by enunciating hard and fast creeds and dogmas have not been India's way of dealing with the things of the unseen and eternal. Very great freedom of thought and latitude in theological views have characterised the evolution of religious thought and expression in India. Indeed Hinduism is really a component of several schools of religious thinkers and sages who have not often seen eye to eye with one another The only binding common factor is the fact of all these religious systems having been born of men of God in India out of a common aspiration after the unseen and eternal.

Also the "Purohit," the Priest, the Sadhu, or any other member of a religious order has the very minimum only (or perhaps nothing at all) of any ecclesiastical or community organisation binding him by a code of regulations or "Rules of an Order" or Church, None of these have any fixed regular monthly income, or graded "salary scale".

Now in all these, there are obvious dangers. and perhaps difficulties to make them fit into modern conditions of life and society. But have we no lessons to learn from the spirit of the whole thing, if not by the actual details of the same?

Can we not simplify our "church" life by aiming at a fellowship of Christ's disciples bound together not by the human strength of a social organisation based on formal vows, ceremonies and hard and fast dogmas. but primarily by personal devotion to the one Lord and Master Jesus Christ proved by life and service? In any case, I strongly feel that the Christian in India should aim at the minimum of organisation and dogmas and maximum of the spirit of religion.



INTERIOR OF THE JEBALAYA.

The following is a suggestion. It appeals to me as a possible way out of the expensive and unnatural ecclesiastical systems we have got into. Let each congregation have a number of its most devoted and consecrated leaders among its members ordained as "Ministers" or "Priests". They may be the local doctors, teachers, engineers, Government officials, merchants, or some such, earning their livelihood according to their training, but receiving no salary from the church for their religious work. As there would be a number of them appointed to each church on the model of the Apostolic method, there will always be somebody at the station free to attend to church duties in case others are busy or away. As for fully theologically-trained and whole-time service men for the ministry, these should be unmarried men who could be travelling round the churches as guests of the members of the churches, cheering up the local clergy, and giving them such spiritual instructions as may be necessary or holding "Retreats", etc., for them, as well as taking part with them in the church services But no distinction shall be made between the married and the unmarried clergy as far as their position as ministers of the church are concerned. Both shall be unpaid.

A great mistake is being made by giving theological training in a foreign tongue. By this the would-be minister's thinking and manner of speech becomes alienated from those of the congregations he is going to serve later. His preaching often savours of artificiality as he thinks and moves in a foreign tongue during the week days and only preaches in the language of his people on Sundays! It is no use pleading the scarcity of theological books in the mother tongue. Create the demand and the supply will also come. If the Scriptures written by the ancients in Hebrew and Greek could be translated, why not the commentaries and other books bearing on the same written by modern people be also translated or original works be written in the mother tongue? This present system is destroying all originality and initiative from our Indian Christian clergy.

Also, theological institutions should be modelled as far as possible on the basis of a "Gurukula", and a family atmosphere should be created. The relation between the teachers

and the students should be more after that of the "Guru" and the "Chela" or that of a father and son, the utmost cordiality and the spirit of love pervading all human relationship. As far as possible there should be the outward symbols of an inward fellowship through such ordinary details as the sharing of meals or lodgings. This will nurture mutual love and confidence and encourage the students to open out the deepest things of the heart to the teacher. The danger of our modern theological institutions is the sacrificing of the cultivation of the inner life of the spirit for that of the intellect, and the development of a purely academical atmosphere. It is also most important that in a country like India where more than 90% of the population live in villages, the needs of the villages, both spiritual and temporal, should not be lost sight of in the training of future ministers of the people. All theological students should have some form of practical training fitting them for proving themselves real servants of the villagers in times of distress and need. India has millions of people who are perpetually on the border-line of starvation. Six months in the year when there are no rains, there is acute unemployment and distress. What is the use of simply going on preaching to these starving people without providing anything to relieve their suffering? "I have compensation on the multitude because they have now been with me three days and they have nothing to eat: And if I should send them away fasting to their homes, they will faint by the way, for diverse of they come from far."—(*Mark 8: 2-3.*)

Christian worship must be real worship and ADORATION of God in spirit and in truth and not an occasion for long sermons or excessive speaking. It has become the accepted standard that a sermon of a certain length should always be part of Christian worship and the minister *has to* preach whether he has a message or not. The preaching of the Gospel must be the outcome of a life of intense waiting before God and not as a part of one's routine duty. During Christian worship a certain period must be set apart for corporate silence whether for meditation or silent waiting upon God together until He fills us with a sense of His presence. In this land of Yoga and mysticism this silent rest of corporate, quiet waiting will be a great help. Saivism teaches that

God appears as a "Thiruarulthotam" (Manifestation of Divine grace) to His Bakthas to impart instruction ("Guru Upadasham") The great Saivite Bakthi Tamil Poet Thayumanavar received from His Divine Guru a "guru upadasham" of only two words "Be Still". ("chumma iru.")

Indian piety has always placed a great value on "Mounam" (silence) in its aspiration after the eternal. In our private and corporate worship we have woefully neglected the importance of silence. We are so filled by the echo of our own words and songs that God is not often given an opportunity to speak to us. Only when we ourselves learn to be still in the realisation of the secret of His Presence, we can hear His still small voice.

Let us make full use of all the rich treasure we have in the devotional poems of our Bakthi poets of the past both for private and corporate acts of worship as several of these poems could very well express also the devotion of the believer in Christ

In the Ashram we make use of a special Prayer Book called "Jabamalai" (Garland of Prayer) in our daily family worship. We have included in this order of service certain acts of Hindu devotion such as "Mounam" (corporate silence), Barayanam (repeating scripture verses together).

We have also "Archana" which litterally means worshipping with flowers, but we use songs symbolising the offering of the flower of our heart; and this is followed by "Prostration" and "Adoration". (Shastanga Namaskaram)

We use a specially prepared song book called "Paumalai" (garland of songs), containing devotional lyrics composed by several Christian Indian Poets, and also a few selected from Hindu Bakthi Poets. This book contains certain "Devarams" (Divine garlands) very fine devotional bits of poetry suitable for chanting at the beginning of the worship.

The Christian Witness. If Christianity in India is to be indigenous, it should be a living and self-propagating Power of God. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the

Power of God unto salvation" (*Rom 1.16*). In this land of spiritual giants of extraordinary religious ferver, and self-surrender, we must not make the fatal mistake of thinking that preaching and propaganda of even the barest Truth would make any headway if it not proved by the life of the preacher. A great deal of harm is being done by any one and every one setting himself up as a preacher of the Gospel "to the heathen", and it is an absurd thing for a young fellow of very little spiritual experience presuming to lecture to a devout and godly non-Christian of greater spiritual depth of mind. Humility is a *sine qua non* on the part of the Christian witness in a land where the greatest of religious minds have so far gone in self-depreciation that they have even denied the blessing of personality to themselves in their anxiety to make the eternal Brahma the all in all the only self-existing "Atman". They may have gone too far, but we are certainly in danger of the opposite sin of parading that all the Truth is vested only in us, We should not proceed on the faction-creating assumption that men of other faiths and their way of thinking and approach to God are necessarily opposed to the Christian Gospel. I believe it is in sharing in all humality and brotherly love. our own spiritual trials and temptations as well as the joy and triumphs of the life of Christ in us with devout men of other faiths that we shall be able to witness for the living power of our Master and Lord to them. Let us frankly and joyfully accept the fact of the indwelling Light whenever we see it in men of other faiths, and rejoice with them, even though they may not name the Name we name, realising the truth revealed in *John 1:9* and *Acts 10 : 34 & 35*.,

During the recent World Conference at Tambaram a famous theologian of the Continent of Europe made the astounding statement that all non-Christian religions were a "rebellion against God". He maintained that there had been no divine revelation outside Christianity. Such an opinion reveals a mind that is closed to Truth. God did reveal Himself through the Judaism of the Old Testament times. Judaism is not Christianity. Our Lord Jesus Himsels accepted Divine revealation wherever He found it. "I have not found so great a faith - no not in Israel", He exclaimed when

the Roman centurian sent for Him. "O woman great is the faith", He said to the Syro-Phonician woman Apostle Peter (whose weakness was not "liberal" thought) when he went into the house of Cornelius the Roman centurian, said. "Of a truth I perceive God is no respector of persons; But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him". (*Acts X, 34, 35*).

The author of St. John's Gospel calls Christ the Logos (the Word) using the terminology of non-Christian Greece because he saw Divine reveleation it it. To him the Logos is the true Light which lightens every man (be he a Christian or non-Christian) that cometh into the world". (*John I, 9.* If the author had written in India he might well have commenced his Gospel with the words "In the beginning was Om, and the Om was with God and the Om was God". Om signifies the ultimate Reality the source of all our being. Hindu worship begins and ends with this Om.

On one of the stones at the entrance gate of the House of Prayer (Jebalaya) at our Ashram are these words "Om, Shanthy! Shanthy! Shanthy! (Peace! Peace! Peace! O Eternal One!

Poets and prophets of this land have abundantly proved their experience of the *eternal* Christ (though strangers to the *historic* Christ) through their lives, teaching and songs. Let me give a few samples with apologies for my very poor English translation (from Tamil):—

O Thou whose love is tender sweet,
More than the nursing mother fond,
My sinful stony heart it melts,
Thy light pervades my inmost heart,
Thou pourest joy like honey sweet,
O all pervading treasure Thou!
Thee I have chased Thee, I have caught
Sublime Siva where wilt Thou go?

(Translated from Thiruvasagam of the Tamil Baktha poet, Manickawasagar who lived about 1000 years ago.)

1. What soe'r the fault the child commits
A mother's love forgives it all,
Such is Thy grace, O Lord of all.

2. When once my heart's attraction turns
Towards Thy grace sublimely sweet
No more for comfort, health it yearns
But offers all at Thy dear feet.

3. Grant me Thy grace that I may look
On every life ev'n as my own
And with tender love behave
With every one around me, Lord.

4. Here is Thy Sanctuary - my heart!
Here is thy incense - fragrant thought!
Here is my love's oblation brought
Draw near, accept, reject them not.

5 Ev'n as the magnet iron draws
Bind Thou my soul to Thy sweet feet
From Thee no more my soul shallroam
For mother-like Thou sooth'st my tears.

6, Inspire me Lord, grant me the mind,
To humbly serve in love mankind
What bliss sublime my soul shall find,
In lowly service thus outlined!

(From the Parabarakanni of Thayumanavar, a Tamil Saivite poet)

We are making use of some of these hymns of Hindu Bakthars in our worship at the Ashram.

The Anglican Faber who turned Roman Catholic was truly *catholic* when he sings :—

"We make His love too narrow
By false limits of our own,
And we magnify His strictness
By a zeal He will not own;
For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

Also in our evangelistc work "polemics" will make us lose the very people who ought to be our spiritual friends, and at most only destroy one form of religion without building up anything better in its place. We do not help anybody by merely attacking and denouncing popular forms of Hinduism as the reply will be made that though it is not the highest form of worship, yet it meets the religious needs of people of a lower spiritual plane. But if we strive to follow our Lord in our own private, social and national life and seek humbly to share the same with our dovout non-Christian friends, they should be able to quickly see the fountain and source of our life in Christ who is always self-revealing, Let us light the lamp of our own lives if we would be light-bearers to others.

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